

OPEN SPACE ELEMENT [1973?] 870005-9

To: Mayor Roberts
Members of the City Council
Planning Commission
Citizens Advisory Committee to Update the General Plan

From: F. G. Lehmann
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AUG 23 1986

MEMORANDUM

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Open Space Plan, Requirements

(Compliance with AB966 Dunlap)

The Bill requires, by June 30, 1973 for cities and counties to adopt, prepare and submit open space plans to Secretary of Resources Agency. It requires, by August 31, 1972, adoption and submission to Secretary, interim open space plan, effective until June 30, 1973, and prescribes contents. (Section 65560)

Comments and recommendations regarding the open space element.

The County of Sonoma has prepared a series of goals regarding this element of the General Plan. Although quite general, my recommendation is that the City of Rohnert Park adopt the County's goals wherever they apply, particularly to areas surrounding the City. (See attached copy).

Because Rohnert Park is a young city occupying a rather small area of the Santa Rosa Plain, it does not have direct jurisdiction over significant natural assets at this time; however, the hills and waterways to the east of the City play an important role as areas for recharging the underground water reservoirs from where the City obtains its water supply; also, these hills and waterways have the potential for providing large regional parks needed when the plains urbanize further.


A. Special Objectives for Areas Outside the City Limits
Public Open Space

1. To provide adequate and easily accessible areas for active and passive recreation for present and future residents of Rohnert Park.

To this effect, the present General Plan calls for parks and schools to be associated spatially, to serve each neighborhood. There is a bedroom tax for the operation and maintenance of recreational areas, and a fee for every new dwelling unit was established for development of new parks and recreational areas.

2. To associate public parks and open spaces with the waterways running through the City.

The waterways have been treated as flood control channels in such a way that landscaping and bikeways are possible in the edges.



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A more specific objective here is to incorporate the waterways into the City park system, and use part of the park budget to landscape them. Also, to request to the Flood Control District that additional funds be shared with the City for this purpose.

3. To request from land owners and developers that, as part of large planned developments, a reasonable amount of land be donated to the public for park and school use.
4. To recognize that public agencies are not the only entities making decisions in these matters of land use and open space, and that a continuous exchange of ideas and working of solutions of mutual benefit with the private sector are essential to attain objectives.

Private Open Space

1. To regulate grouping of residential units and densities in a way in which open spaces are available, easily accessible and well maintained. This will not only enhance private values of land and dwellings, but by providing certain kinds of recreation privately, the public may save scarce funds that are needed for larger community facilities.

The present ordinances of the City are consistent with this objective.

Open Space and the General Plan

The current General Plan for the City remains as the guideline for open spaces until it is updated, which will take place much before the deadline of June, 1973.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
SUMMARY LISTING OF GOALS	2
STATEMENT OF GOALS AND POLICIES	
GENERAL GOAL AND POLICIES	4
GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO MANAGED RESOURCE PRODUCTION.	4
Policies Relating to Forestry.	5
Policies Relating to Agriculture	5
Policies Relating to Minerals.	5
Policies Relating to Water	6
Policies Relating to Harvestable Game & Fish	6
GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO THE PRESERVATION OF PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE	6
GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO SCENIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES PRESERVATION.	7
GOALS AND POLICIES RELATING TO NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	8
GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO RECREATION.	9
GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO THE URBAN SETTING AND AESTHETICS.	9
GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY	10
Policy Relating to Geologic Hazards.	10
Policies Relating to Flood Hazards	10
Policy Relating to Fire Hazards.	10
Policies Relating to Airports.	10
GOALS AND POLICIES RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND UTILITY SERVICES	11
Policies Relating to Transportation Routes	11
Policies Relating to Utility Services.	12
GOAL AND POLICY RELATING TO LANDS RESERVED FOR FUTURE DESIGNATION.	12
SOME TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY.	13

INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the imperative to consider our relationship to the environment and to husband our limited natural and cultural resources, the Legislature of the State of California has mandated the development and adoption of certain elements as part of the County General Plan. Among the areas which must be covered by general plan elements are open space and conservation.

To assist in meeting those State requirements and providing for the orderly development of the County in those areas mentioned, and in the area of recreation, the Board of Supervisors mandated the Citizens Advisory Committee on Open Space, Conservation and Recreation late in January of this year. The request to participate went out to agricultural, environmental, and certain occupational organizations, to recreation interests, policy and technical advisors from government and any other interested citizens.

In the past months, we have held bi-monthly meetings and heard technical presentations on the status of agriculture in this county, soil types, geologic conditions, legal aspects of open space, and other topics. We have worked in sub committees in six general areas relating to open space, conservation and recreation issues:

1. managed resource production
2. natural and human resources preservation
3. public health, welfare and well-being
4. public safety
5. transportation routes and utility services
6. lands reserved for possible future urban uses

In compliance with the law, we have compiled the following statement of goals and policies which this Committee recommends for the Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation elements of the General Plan. We believe this report to be an important first step with specific details to be developed in the coming year. Our work, when integrated into the Sonoma County General Plan, will be a tool to guide the wise development of the county.

SUMMARY LISTING OF GOALS

GENERAL GOAL

- I. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to restore and maintain the environment for the economic, recreational, aesthetic, and ecological needs of the public.

GOAL RELATING TO MANAGED RESOURCE PRODUCTION

- II. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to assure economic diversity by maintaining and protecting those areas which are valuable for the production of forest, agricultural, and mineral products, fresh water, and harvestable fish and game.

GOAL RELATING TO PRESERVATION OF PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE

- III. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to assure that its natural biological diversity be preserved for posterity.

GOALS RELATING TO SCENIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES PRESERVATION

- IV. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to safeguard and maintain areas of outstanding scenic, historic, or cultural value.

GOALS RELATING TO NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

- V. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to dispose of and reuse both liquid and solid waste in ways which cause no hazard to health or safety and in ways which are economically efficient, ecologically sound and aesthetically pleasing.
- VI. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to develop agricultural, industrial, and transportation systems which will minimize air pollution and not result in economic hardship.

GOAL RELATING TO RECREATION

- VII. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to provide adequate, usable recreational facilities for all of the county's residents and for those people from other areas who may come to Sonoma County for its recreational assets, provided such recreational use is consistent with maintenance of environmental quality.

GOAL RELATING TO THE URBAN SETTING AND AESTHETICS

VIII. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to provide an urban setting of such outstanding quality that urban dwellers will not feel a need to escape to other areas.

GOAL RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY

IX. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to avoid land uses which threaten public safety.

GOAL RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND UTILITY SERVICES

X. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to provide facilities which meet the transportation and utility needs of the public and are of high ecological and aesthetic quality.

GOAL RELATING TO LANDS RESERVED FOR FUTURE DESIGNATION

XI. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to provide for future unforeseen land uses.

STATEMENT OF GOALS AND POLICIES

GENERAL GOAL AND POLICIES

I. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to restore and maintain the environment for the economic, recreational, aesthetic, and ecological needs of the public.

To this end, it shall be the policy of this county to:

1. Carefully evaluate all proposed uses of land as to their impact on the environment;
2. Give high priority to open space uses of those lands which are especially valuable because they serve more than one open space purpose;
3. Give high priority to open space uses of those lands which are valuable as open space and which, if not protected, would be changed in a way that would preclude their future use as open space;
4. Work for tax and other economic reforms that will make possible the preservation of desired open space. Such reforms should include the ultimate shift away from a tax based on property value to a tax based more on actual land use or, preferably, income;
5. Support by public funds, or other means, any open space held for public welfare which is rendered economically non-viable for private uses by such designation;
6. Recognize that a population growth policy may be implied in the various county policies, and henceforth, to consider such a policy explicitly, along with the social, economic, environmental, and aesthetic changes in community character and institutions which may result from it. Such a policy should attempt to assure that the county incurs only the population growth its residents deem acceptable and can afford to accommodate.

GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO MANAGED RESOURCE PRODUCTION

II. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to assure economic diversity by maintaining and protecting those areas which are valuable for the production of forest, agricultural, and mineral products, fresh water, and harvestable fish and game.

To this end, it shall be the policy of this county to:

Policies Related to Forestry

1. Aid in protecting the timber and environmental values of all forests economically suitable for logging;
2. As far as possible, keep such forest lands in parcels sufficiently large to encourage economical timber production;
3. Encourage reforestation to perpetuate timber production and to protect the land;
4. Require high standards of forest practices in all areas of timber production;
5. Explore the use of forest lands for such multiple purposes as preserving wildlife, hunting, fishing, hiking, or other compatible uses;
6. Give special consideration to the preservation of timber areas that have unique biotic or scenic characteristics;

Policies Related to Agriculture

1. Protect and maintain productive agricultural lands for the value of their products, their contribution to community life, their environmental values;
2. Give priority to areas where agriculture is the predominant industry, including prime lands and those areas most suitable for special crops or activities, recognizing incompatibility of some residential and agricultural uses;
3. Encourage formation or retention of parcel sizes sufficient to protect such agricultural lands and to sustain an economic use;

Policies Related to Minerals

1. Require that mineral-extraction operations be performed in a way that is compatible with surrounding land uses and does not adversely affect the environment, giving particular consideration to the protection of watersheds, water courses, and underground aquifers and aquifer recharge areas;
2. Consider inventories of mineral resource when planning or approving development and discourage residential, commercial, and industrial development which would be incompatible with proper mining practices;

Policies Related to Water Resource

1. Give highest priority in any consideration of land use to the protection of the water shed and underground aquifers;

Policies Related to Harvestable Game and Fish

1. Evaluate all activities and developments on the coast with the objective of preventing damage to coastal and shore fisheries;
2. Take measures to minimize future damage to fresh-water fisheries and fish habitats and, as far as possible, to repair past damage that has resulted in a decline in the quality of fresh-water sport fishing in the county;
3. Work with other parties towards maximizing hunting and fishing opportunities in the county, while protecting the rights of owners of private property and retaining the diversity of non-game species;
4. Support the maintenance and wise management of adequate populations of game and fish;
5. Support existing harbor and port facilities so as to encourage an active commercial and sport fishing industry in the county.

GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO THE PRESERVATION OF PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE

III. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to assure that its natural biological diversity be preserved for posterity.

To this end, it shall be the policy of this county to:

1. Assure that all proposed developments will be adequately reviewed with regard to possible adverse or beneficial effects on plant and animal life;
2. Establish a system of permanent Wildlife Habitat Areas. Human uses of these areas should be carefully examined, and construction should not occur within these areas unless it is demonstrated that there will be no unduly detrimental effects on wildlife. Agricultural and recreational uses could be permitted where appropriate. Wildlife Habitat Areas should include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - a. Remaining natural stream or river courses including their riparian vegetation and floodplains, except where modification is necessary to protect existing structures;

- b. Natural freshwater and salt marshes;
- c. Estuaries, bays, and mudflats (Use of bays as harbors for fishing vessels and a number of private vessels (that is not detrimental to wildlife values of these areas) should be allowed to continue);
- d. Coastal dune areas, and other coastal areas with unique values for plant and animal life;
- e. All habitats necessary for the preservation of rare or endangered species of animals and plants;
- f. Selected areas of unique significance in the biogeography of North America that are located in the County;
- g. Selected areas of unique significance in the biogeography of California that are located in the County;
- h. Selected areas of unique significance in the biogeography of Sonoma County.

GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO SCENIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES PRESERVATION

IV. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to safeguard and maintain areas of outstanding scenic, historic, or cultural value.

To this end, it shall be the policy of this county to:

1. Assure the preservation of significant geological features for their educational and scenic value;
2. Where possible, assure that visual access from roads and trails to unique scenic features remain unimpaired by construction of human facilities;
3. Preserve adequate open space around missions, historic settlements and buildings, areas of archeological significance, and other features important to the human history of the county so that the natural settings of such areas are retained;
4. Preserve significant archeological sites wherever possible.
5. Wherever possible, designate around or near public schools open space that may eventually be developed as natural areas for study by students;
6. Where possible, designate around hospitals, public institutions for the care of handicapped and elderly people, and correctional institutions open space as a way to provide the

quiet needed for these institutions, as well as serve recreational needs;

7. Give full consideration to the desires and needs of other public and private institutions for open space.

GOALS AND POLICIES RELATING TO NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

V. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to dispose of and reuse both liquid and solid waste in ways which cause no hazard to health or safety and in ways which are economically efficient, ecologically sound and aesthetically pleasing.

VI. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to develop agricultural, industrial and transportation systems which will minimize air pollution, and not result in economic hardship.

To this end, it shall be the policy of this county to:

1. Consider both liquid and solid waste as resources;
2. Encourage and monitor research and experimentation in the fields of liquid and solid waste disposal and reuse. Such research and experimentation should involve technological, land use, ecological and economic considerations;
3. Enforce existing water quality legislation and regulations;
4. Disseminate information on how water quality control violators may comply with the laws;
5. Explore a policy of providing economic aid on an interim basis for those segments of the County's population which are critically and adversely affected by stricter enforcement of laws protecting the quality of Sonoma County's water resources;
6. Encourage land use and development patterns which minimize the need for extensive transportation of people to and from their residence to places of work, education, trade, and recreation;
7. Encourage and monitor research and experimentation aimed at developing practical methods of reducing air pollution in the County. Such work should consider transportation systems, energy production and consumption, land use and development patterns, and the role of vegetation in air filtration;
8. Periodically review governmental laws, regulations and policies to determine whether they are consistent with the above goals and policies considering economics and the state of current technology.

GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO RECREATION

VII. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to provide adequate, usable recreational facilities for all of the county's residents and for those people from other areas who may come to Sonoma County for its recreational assets, provided such recreational use is consistent with maintenance of environmental quality.

To this end, it shall be the policy of the county to:

1. Establish trail systems which connect parks, schools, playgrounds, shopping areas, and other public and scenic areas. Some of the trails could make multiple use of transportation and utility corridors (auto, equestrian, pedestrian and bicycle traffic), but those uses should be separate where required for safety and convenience. Other trails could traverse relatively undeveloped areas, but provision should be made to prevent property and ecological damage;
2. Provide diversity in the types of recreational opportunities available throughout the County;
3. Encourage the development and expansion of privately owned and operated recreational facilities to complement publically owned parks and recreational facilities;
4. Attempt to insure that those people who use publicly supported recreational facilities contribute to the cost of providing those facilities.

GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO THE URBAN SETTING AND AESTHETICS

VIII. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to provide an urban setting of such outstanding quality that urban dwellers will not feel a need to escape to other areas.

To this end, it shall be the policy of the county to:

1. Preserve the identity of the individual urban and sub-urban communities in the County by setting aside areas for various open space uses;
2. Discourage the wasteful land use practice of "urban sprawl" utilizing the concept of compact or delineated growth patterns;
3. Provide visual relief from intense urbanization by using open space areas around and, in some cases, extending into urbanized areas;
4. Reduce noise annoyances by the use of vegetation and open space to separate land uses.

5. Retain the ecological, recreational, and aesthetic benefits of Sonoma County's natural waterways;
6. Encourage the use of native vegetation where planing is used to enhance the natural beauty of the County.

GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO PUBLIC SAFETY

IX. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to avoid land uses which threaten public safety.

To this end, it shall be the policy of Sonoma County to:

Policy Related to Geologic Hazards

1. Assure that population densities and development are kept to a minimum in areas of geologic hazard, such as active fault zones, land slide areas, and certain bay muds.

Policies Related to Flood Hazards

1. Classify as permanent open space those areas where flood hazards exist;
2. Establish adequate setback regulations on streams and cliffs;
3. Regulate development in areas around existing or proposed dams, ponds, or other water impoundments where geologic hazards exist and where failures of such structures would endanger life and property.

Policy Related to Fire Hazards

1. Regulate the density and type of construction in areas designated as critical fire hazard areas, consulting with the appropriate fire services for particular regulations prior to subdivision approval or the issuance of a building permit.

Policies Related to Airports

1. Develop Sonoma County Airport as the only feeder airport in the county capable of handling medium commercial carriers; such carriers would connect with the major regional airports;
2. Maintain the smaller airports in the county as bases for light aircraft only, with appropriate clear zones around these facilities;
3. Establish or increase clear zones to provide adequate safety margins and insure that residential areas are not subjected to excessive noise levels;

4. Avoid residential development in airport approach zones;
5. Restrict development in noise zones established on the basis of decible level.

GOAL AND POLICIES RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION ROUTES AND UTILITY SERVICES

X. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to provide facilities which meet the transportation and utility needs of the public and are of high ecological and aesthetic quality.

To this end, it shall be the policy of Sonoma County to:

Policies Relating to Transportation Routes

1. Plan proposed transportation routes including major and secondary highways, bicycle and bridle paths to be compatible with natural processes and land forms;
 - a. Geological features including fault zones, slide and erosion areas shall be carefully considered;
 - b. Prime agricultural land should be avoided when practicable.
2. Treat landscaping as an integral part of transportation construction and emphasize use of native trees and plants;
3. Protect the roadside (scenic corridor) of scenic highways in the county by scenic highway zoning;
4. Plan transportation routes (not necessarily roads) which will provide public access to public lands where practicable;
5. Keep abreast of technology with regard to new modes of transportation with the purpose of upgrading present systems;
6. Review with local agencies and citizens committees the priorities for highway construction or other transportation facilities;
7. Place emphasis on environmental impact statements prior to construction of transportation facilities;
8. Require economic Cost-Benefit studies on proposed major transportation projects;
9. Integrate Sonoma County's public transportation with the regional public transportation systems of other counties;
10. Retain in perpetuity existing railroad rights-of-way for future transportation needs, utility corridors, and recreational uses;

11. Maintain the Petaluma River and Bodega Harbor as potential waterway transportation routes.

Policies Related to Utility Services

1. Adopt a general plan of utility services to supply the needs of the people of Sonoma County for electricity, natural gas, telephone, Cable TV, water and sewer;
2. Consider the particular environment through which proposed public utilities will pass, so as to minimize the disturbance of aesthetic values;
3. Avoid heavily developed residential areas, public recreation and scenic areas, when routing major transmission lines, where practicable;
4. Encourage continued studies to develop economical methods of installing underground electric transmission lines;
5. Require electrical distribution lines in new residential or commercial areas to be placed underground and establish a plan for converting existing overhead lines to underground facilities where feasible;
6. Require that electric substations and gas control stations be located, designed and landscaped to fit inconspicuously and harmoniously into their surroundings;
7. Encourage the multiple use of transmission line rights-of-way for riding and hiking trails, pedestrian ways, landscaped greenways, parking, park areas and wildlife preserves;
8. Consolidate utilities into common utility corridors whenever practicable;
9. Require Economic Cost-Benefit and environmental impact studies on all proposed aqueducts and trunk sewers well in advance of construction;
10. Consolidate growth in cities and communities to avoid long extensions of water and sewer services.

GOAL AND POLICY RELATING TO LANDS RESERVED FOR FUTURE DESIGNATION

- XI. It shall be the goal of Sonoma County to provide for future unforeseen land uses.

To this end, it shall be the policy of Sonoma County to:

1. Reserve appropriate areas of open space for future designation for urban uses or permanent open space, depending upon demonstrated need.

SOME TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY

It is the plan of this Citizens Committee to Proceed in the next year with more specific work on the Open Space, Conservation and Recreation Elements of the General Plan to implement these goals and policies. There are many areas which we feel require additional study both by ourselves and technical personnel. Although the following is incomplete, it does indicate those studies we feel are desirable. They are:

- A. A study of the appropriate tax reforms and tools available to make possible the preservation of open space;
- B. A study of methods of public compensation to land owners whose property value is reduced or development rights infringed upon by restrictions of the County Plan;
- C. A study of lot split and subdivision ordinances and regulations, with special emphasis on their effect on the preservation of optimum parcel size, to protect forest and agricultural lands and to sustain parcels large enough for economic use;
- D. A detailed study of the recharge system for ground water resources and quality and location of underground aquifers;
- E. A more comprehensive analysis of the geologic hazards of Sonoma County;
- F. A complete analysis of the flood hazards of Sonoma County, including both flood plains (based on elevation) and other areas which have a history of flooding;
- G. A complete inventory of all existing dams, ponds, or similar water impoundments, and diked lands and analysis of the geologic hazards that may influence these structures;
- H. A study identifying areas where critical fire hazard exists or where development could create a critical fire hazard.
- I. A comprehensive study of areas of unique plant and animal life;
- J. An inventory of areas in the county of unique historical interests
- K. A study of all natural and man made waterways in Sonoma County with consideration given to means and costs of maintaining and restoration of natural stream characteristics.



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